

**Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2011
Testimony of
Leo C. Arnone, Commissioner
Department of Correction**

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Leo Arnone. I am the Commissioner of the Department of Correction.

I am here today to speak to our appropriations status and the Governor's budget proposal for the next two fiscal years.

When I appeared before you in November I addressed a deficiency projection for this fiscal year. At that time I was concerned that our aggressive savings effort last year might have a rebound effect, in which deferred expenses would cause our deficiency to grow higher as the current year progressed. I am pleased to note that our deficiency has, in fact, been reduced by \$1 million. Had it not been for the record snowfall in January, our projection might have improved even more.

I am also proud to note that our total expenditures in Fiscal 2010 and as projected for the current year are actually lower than they were in 2008. I believe my staff has truly worked toward a spending level that is limited to necessary expenses.

Let me add, though, that we remain resolutely committed to safety -- safety of the public, of our staff, and of the inmate population. As we move forward, that commitment will not be compromised.

As always, the key factor in our financial status is the size of the inmate population. Today the population is nearly 600 lower than it was at this time last year. I believe that with legislative support, there are opportunities for further controlling the size of our population. With a focus on public safety, these opportunities will enable the DOC to reduce costs as well as recidivism and to better serve the concept of Correction.

The Governor's recommendation for the Department of Correction is a reasonable and well-considered basis for addressing these opportunities, and for operating in an extremely challenging fiscal climate. In the coming biennium, the Governor has proposed three significant changes that will make our agency more efficient.

First, he has proposed savings of \$10 million in each year from a negotiated change in the schedule for Correction Officers and Lieutenants. This is one of many negotiating points under discussion that I believe are appropriate in light of our financial challenges; each is aimed at reducing costs while retaining professional standards and keeping valuable jobs in place. As you know, the final outcome of negotiations cannot be known, but we will

My staff and I are deeply aware of the expense our Correctional system places on the citizens of Connecticut. We will continue working to make this system both as safe and as efficient as possible.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today, and I would be happy to answer your questions.